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Mrs Sarah Threlkeld-Brown
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Dear Mrs Threlkeld-Brown

Short inspection of Clifton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant change to staffing. Prior to you joining the school, there was a period of interim leadership with two acting headteachers. Pupils, parents, staff and you told me about the changes in the school since you joined it. Staff welcome the clear direction you have given to the school and governors note how this has enabled the staff team to work together to improve the school. You have ensured that all those involved have taken a fresh look at how the school is organised, with a revised approach to the curriculum, rigorous checks on assessment and a determined effort to work with the wider community. The benefits of these new approaches can be seen, for example, in pupils' excitement about their new side-cover designs for some of the lorries in a locally-based company's national lorry fleet. This happened because the company was so impressed by the quality of pupils' art and design work in a 'real-world' task.

Parents and pupils told me how the school feels like a family. They told me that it is welcoming and friendly. You have set the clear principle that the school's work must always put pupils first; staff readily accept this. You have worked with the whole school community to redefine the school's vision and aims. These are summed up in the school's new motto, 'Success and happiness for all'. The work of the whole staff team is making sure that this aspiration actually happens. In addition, you have all reviewed the school's values and have identified the 'Seven Cs' of Clifton – confidence, communication, collaboration, commitment, creativity, curiosity and

craftsmanship – as key attributes. These are widely displayed in the school so that everyone is reminded of them. More importantly, I saw each of these being demonstrated as I met pupils doing their normal work while I was at the school.

You know what the school does well and are precise in determining the things that need to be improved further. The priorities in the school's improvement plan are sensible and it is good that this document is actively used to move the school forward.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified that teaching in mathematics, and overall, needed to improve, for example by increasing the challenge to pupils in mathematics lessons. The school is continuing to develop its mathematics provision and is in the early stages of a new approach to teaching mathematics. I saw pupils working hard in mathematics and enjoying their learning. Teachers provide additional tasks to stretch pupils and to increase their reasoning skills. In addition, some pupils are given even more challenge because they work with older pupils on harder tasks. While teaching overall helps pupils to do well, you told me that there is still space for different teachers to share their skills and expertise so that all get even better.

The parents I spoke to and those who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire were highly satisfied about the school and its recent development. This was echoed in the results of the school's own survey of parents' views that you shared with me. The many positive comments received are reflected in just one: 'The school has a wonderful community feel with the children at its heart.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding is given high priority. The arrangements for this are thorough. The school's child protection policy is easily available on the school website and additional information is available to parents and visitors to the school. The school recently completed an external audit to check that its safeguarding approaches were sufficient. This led to a very few minor recommendations, all of which have been addressed. Staff receive the training they need to be confident in carrying out their safeguarding responsibilities.

Governors also know about their role in protecting pupils from possible harm. They recently worked with the school, following a suggestion of a new parent, to improve the security of pupils' welcome to school each morning.

Pupils told me that they feel safe. They can explain why this is and how they have been taught about safety. Pupils behave well towards each other. They say that there is no bullying. The Year 6 'buddy scheme' for the Reception children is just one way in which older pupils look after younger ones.

Inspection findings

- You have worked hard with colleagues to develop the school's team approach and its commitment to seeking the best for pupils. Pupils know that they also

should play their part in belonging to `#TeamClifton`. While the school has recently experienced a difficult period, you, staff and governors have ensured that this is now firmly in the past. You have identified aspects which needed to be changed and set about addressing these with vigour and enthusiasm. The school's growing success is a clear indication that the trend of improvement is rapid and secure. You have also started to build leaders' confidence, which will help to embed the improvements.

- The decline in pupils' outcomes up to 2016 was reversed in 2017. This change included pupils of all ages so that more children reached a good level of development as they left the early years, more pupils in Year 1 were successful in the check of their phonics skills and Year 6 pupils made more progress in writing. You are aware that there may be variation year by year because the profiles of the pupils in the small year groups change, but you are not complacent. Even with the improvements to writing, you have identified that pupils' spelling is not good enough across the school and so have introduced a new system to help each pupil to spell well. The staff team check closely on pupils' progress. They discuss this regularly so that adjustments can be made to teaching or extra support and encouragement offered. You have seen that this has worked as, for example, pupils have been able to jump stages in the school's reading scheme.
- You know that, over time, pupils have tended not to do as well in mathematics as in reading and writing. You have already made pupils' learning in mathematics a priority and are working with the subject leader to develop all teachers' skills in teaching mathematics. Teachers are expected to place more emphasis on developing pupils' mathematical fluency, reasoning and problem-solving as expected by the national curriculum. You have secured additional funding from the Department for Education to put in place a new approach to teaching mathematics. This funding will be matched by a contribution from the school's parent teacher association.
- The school's curriculum has a good balance between English, mathematics and other subjects. For example, pupils learn science as a key part of the theme-based learning provided each afternoon. I saw pupils enjoying learning about light and why shadows happen as they worked together to prepare shadow puppets ready to perform the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Pupils do well in science. All pupils are expected to take part in outdoor learning. You have just introduced new school certification of this programme so that pupils are challenged to broaden their experiences.
- Pupils' overall attendance is at or above the national average. In the past, some groups of potentially more vulnerable pupils have not attended as well as others. The school is active in working with parents to make sure that pupils attend properly. You described to me the steps you have taken and how these have worked in encouraging pupils to be at school so that they can learn and succeed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop the confidence of staff and the school community in its growing success so that:
 - the leadership skills of all members of staff develop further
 - the existing examples of highly effective teaching approaches in the school are further shared to have even wider impact
- pupils' learning and outcomes in mathematics continue to improve as the planned new approach to mathematics is fully implemented.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and with the early years leader to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school during lessons and playtime. I toured the school, accompanied by you. I observed teaching and learning in classes across the school and heard a small group of pupils read. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' books and other examples of their written work. I examined documents including information about the safeguarding of pupils, the school's self-evaluation document, the improvement plan, records of pupils' achievement and information about how assessment is checked. I considered 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including nine additional written responses. I spoke with some parents at the start of the school day and had a longer meeting with one parent.